



THE ISIS TERROR THREAT IN AMERICA

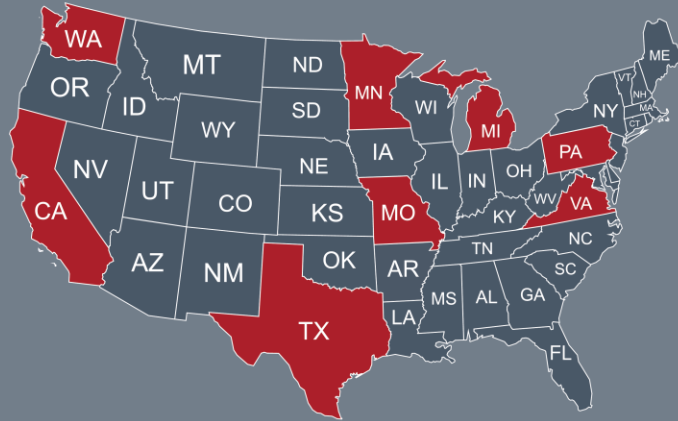
So far in 2016...

9 PEOPLE ARRESTED in...

8 STATES for...

California, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Pennsylvania,
Texas, Virginia, Washington

- ✓ **ATTACK PLOTS/THREATS**
- ✓ **OVERSEAS TRAVEL**
- ✓ **LYING TO AUTHORITIES**
- ✓ **WEAPONS CHARGES**

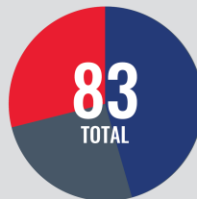


Since 2014...

**84 TOTAL PEOPLE
ARRESTED** in **24 STATES**

Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Kansas, Massachusetts,
Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Mississippi, North Carolina, New Jersey,
New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Texas, Virginia,
Washington, Wisconsin

ISIS-LINKED ATTACK PLOTS AGAINST THE WEST



- **36 PLOTS** IN EUROPE
- **24 PLOTS** IN THE UNITED STATES
- **23 PLOTS** TARGETING WESTERNERS
OUTSIDE US/EUROPE

FOREIGN FIGHTER THREAT

Nearly...
40,000

**FOREIGN FIGHTERS
FROM MORE THAN
120 COUNTRIES HAVE
TRAVELED TO SYRIA**

Source: White House

Of these fighters...

6,900 FROM
THE WEST

250 FROM
THE U.S.

Source: White House

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This document is produced by the Majority Staff of the House Homeland Security Committee. It is based on information culled from open source materials, including media reports, publicly available government statements, and nongovernmental reports.

KEY POINTS

- **ISIS poses an increasingly deadly threat to the United States, its allies, and global security.** ISIS and its supporters have exploited sanctuaries across the Middle East and North Africa, the flow of nearly 40,000 jihadists into Syria, a massive refugee wave, and security gaps to execute a terror campaign that includes 83 attack plots against Western targets since 2014. There have been two



dozen ISIS-linked attack plots inside the United States, where authorities have arrested more than 80 ISIS-linked suspects.

- **Al Qaeda and its allies have seized critical terrain and regenerated their terror networks.** Al Qaeda's key ally and enabler in Afghanistan, the Taliban, controls more territory than at any point since 2001. In Yemen, al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) has gained control over three provincial capitals, an estimated \$100 million worth of bank deposits, and nearly 400 miles of coastline, according to a nongovernmental expert and a media outlet investigation. Al Qaeda's Syrian affiliate has also established a sizable safe haven.
- **The Iranian regime continues to meet Western concessions with escalating hostility.** Iran has made several attempts to smuggle weapons into Yemen in the past month. These destabilizing actions follow Iran's kidnapping of American sailors, another illicit ballistic missile test, unabated aggression in Syria, and repeated threats against Israel. The Justice Department revealed last month that an Iranian military-directed hacker was infiltrating the control systems of critical infrastructure in the U.S. just days before President Obama's phone call with Iran's president in 2013.
- **The Obama Administration has freed nearly 30 hardened terrorists from Guantanamo Bay this year despite historical recidivism rates topping 30 percent.** As of earlier this year, the Director of National Intelligence assessed that 204 former Guantanamo inmates had rejoined Islamist extremists or were suspected of doing so.

HOMEOWN ISLAMIST EXTREMISM

- Since September 11, 2001, there have been at least 150 homegrown jihadist plots in the United States, including attempts by individuals to join terrorists overseas and execute attacks at home. Around 85 percent of these cases have occurred or been uncovered after 2009.¹
- Authorities have arrested 84 individuals and charged 3 others in absentia in ISIS-linked cases in the United States.² The cases include individuals: plotting attacks; attempting to travel to join ISIS overseas; sending money, equipment, and weapons to terrorists; falsifying statements to federal authorities; and failing to report a felony. Six ISIS-linked terrorists have been killed as they were carrying out attacks.
- Nearly 90 percent of the ISIS supporters charged in the U.S. are male and almost 40 percent of them are converts to Islam; their average age is 26.³ Around one-third of ISIS-linked suspects arrested by authorities were on their way to an airport with the intent of traveling overseas to join ISIS.

Recent Developments

- March 29: A 23-year-old Minnesota resident who was facing charges of lying to the FBI about his online contact with ISIS was arrested and charged with issuing violent threats at a Walgreens store.

¹ This figure is based on open-source data compiled by the Congressional Research Service and the Majority Staff of the Homeland Security Committee.

² This figure is based on open-source data compiled and analyzed by the Majority Staff of the Homeland Security Committee.

³ These data points are from the George Washington University's Program on Extremism. See:

<https://cchs.gwu.edu/sites/cchs.gwu.edu/files/downloads/ISIS%20in%20America%20-%20February%202016.pdf>.



Abdul Raheem Habil Ali-Skelton had reportedly communicated with Syria-based ISIS members as recently as July 2015.

- March 17: Faisal Mohammad, an 18-year-old college student who attacked his classmates on the University of California-Merced campus in November 2015, appears to have been a self-radicalized jihadist who drew inspiration from ISIS propaganda, according to an FBI update.
- March 16: Iraqi Kurdish authorities reported that 26-year-old American citizen Mohamad Jamal Khweis surrendered to their forces near ISIS-controlled territory. Khweis reportedly joined ISIS after traveling through Europe and into Iraq via Turkey before fleeing the group.

ISIS TERROR ATTACK PLOTS AGAINST THE WEST

- There have been 83 ISIS-linked plots to attack Western targets since 2014, including 24 inside the United States and 36 across Europe.⁴

Recent Developments

- March 24: French authorities foiled an imminent terror attack after uncovering an “unprecedented” weapons cache and arresting French national Reda Kriket. Kriket is believed to have returned from Syria and was reportedly a key member of the same recruiting network that included the on-the-ground ISIS commander for the November 2015 attack in Paris, Abdelhamid Abaaoud.
- March 22: An ISIS terror cell conducted suicide bombings at an airport and metro station in Brussels, killing at least 32 people, including four Americans. The cell, which also participated in the November 2015 Paris attack, had reportedly been planning to target France before changing its plans in the wake of the arrest of a network member.
- March 17: The November 2015 UC-Merced campus attacker, Faisal Mohammad, had ISIS propaganda stored on his computer and had visited the group’s website in the weeks leading up to the attack. He had been carrying a copy of an ISIS flag during the attack.

FOREIGN FIGHTERS

- Almost 40,000 Sunni fighters from over 120 countries have converged on the battlefields of Syria and Iraq since 2012. At least 6,900 Westerners are among these fighters; around 250 of them traveled from the United States, according to the White House. More than 1,000 European fighters have already returned from Syria to four countries – the U.K., France, Germany, and Belgium.⁵

⁴ These figures are based on open-source data compiled and analyzed by the Majority Staff of the Homeland Security Committee.

⁵ This figure is a HSC tally based on public statements made by U.K. Home Secretary Theresa May, French PM Manuel Valls, German Prosecutor Peter Frank, and Belgian Police Chief Catherine De Bolle.



- Up to 20,000 Shi'a militants, including those from Lebanese Hezbollah and Iraqi militias, have also traveled to the conflict zone to fight alongside the Assad regime under Iranian direction.

FOREIGN JIHADIST NETWORKS & SAFE HAVENS

ISIS

- At least 34 Islamist extremist groups from around the world have pledged their allegiance to ISIS. ISIS, its affiliates and supporting groups are operating in nearly two dozen countries or territories, including Afghanistan, Algeria, Bangladesh, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, Libya, Lebanon, Nigeria, the Palestinian territories (Gaza), Pakistan, Philippines, Russia (North Caucasus region), Sudan, Syria, Tunisia and Yemen.⁶ The group has established eight official branches.
- ISIS controls nearly two dozen cities and towns across Iraq and Syria.⁷ It maintains its core bases in Mosul, Iraq, and Raqqa, Syria. ISIS holds roughly 60 miles of strategic terrain along Syria's border with Turkey.
- In Libya, ISIS controls the coastal city of Sirte, which had a pre-war population of 100,000, and more than 150 miles of coastline on the Mediterranean Sea. It also has a presence in Benghazi, Darna, and Sabratha. It has amassed as many as 6,000 fighters across Libya, an estimate that has doubled over the last 12 to 18 months.
- In Afghanistan, ISIS is operating in two or three districts in southern Nangarhar province along the Pakistan border and commands an estimated 1,000 – 3,000 fighters. ISIS's affiliate in Egypt, which blew up a commercial passenger plane in 2015, has maintained its foothold in the Sinai Peninsula. In Yemen, ISIS has exploited the ongoing war there to draw recruits and expand its footprint.

Al Qaeda

- Al Qaeda's affiliates "have proven resilient and are positioned to make gains in 2016," according to the Director of National Intelligence. In particular, AQAP is "strengthening and expanding its reach in the absence of a significant [counterterrorism] effort" in Yemen. AQAP controls several provincial capitals and at least 8 populated cities and towns, according to a nongovernmental assessment. It also reportedly controls nearly 400 miles of coastline and earns millions in taxes, according to a media organization's investigation. Al Qaeda's Syrian affiliate Jabhat al Nusra has established a significant footprint in northern Syria among Syrian Sunni opposition groups.
- American military officials have increasingly expressed concern over al Qaeda in Afghanistan and indicated that the group's presence in that country had been underestimated. Moreover, Brigadier General Charles Cleveland warned recently that al Qaeda "will very likely be working more closely with the Taliban as we move forward."

⁶ Data compiled by the Majority Staff of the Homeland Security Committee.

⁷ These figures are derived from assessments of territorial control conducted by the Institute for the Study of War research organization.



GUANTANAMO BAY DETAINEES

- The Director of National Intelligence's (ODNI) latest assessment of recidivism among former Guantanamo Bay detainees concluded that over 30 percent of detainees released have returned or are suspected of having returned to jihadist activity.
 - On April 16, the Defense Department announced the transfer of 9 Yemeni detainees to Saudi Arabia. The Obama Administration has released 27 terrorists from Guantanamo Bay in 2016, leaving 80 at the facility.
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TERRORISTS' EXPLOITATION OF REFUGEE FLOWS

- Massive refugee flows into Europe are “masking the movement” of Islamist extremist fighters into the West, according to Supreme Allied Commander Europe General Philip Breedlove. At least one of the European ISIS operatives arrested in the wake of the March 2016 Brussels attack reportedly reentered Europe by posing as a Syrian refugee in Greece.
 - The National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) has identified “...individuals with ties to terrorist groups in Syria attempting to gain entry to the U.S. through the U.S. refugee program.”
 - The Obama administration has proposed resettling at least 10,000 more Syrian refugees in the U.S. this fiscal year. Nearly 3,200 Syrian refugees have been resettled in the U.S. over the last five years. Law enforcement and intelligence officials have repeatedly indicated that we lack the on-the-ground intelligence in Syria needed to confidently vet individuals and identify security risks in the process of screening Syrian refugees for resettlement.
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THE IRANIAN TERROR THREAT

- American and French naval forces interdicted two separate Iranian weapons shipments destined for the al Houthi rebels in Yemen on March 20 and 28. Among the weapons were AK-47s, sniper rifles, RPG launchers, and anti-tank missiles.
- Seven Iranians directed by the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps were recently charged by the Justice Department for launching a campaign of cyber attacks and intrusions against American financial institutions and critical infrastructure.